

HAMPTON BUDGET COMMITTEE
MINUTES
November 9, 2006

Budget Committee Members Present

Mary-Louise Woolsey, Chairman
Michael Plouffe, Vice-Chairman
Ginny Russell, Selectman Representative
Maureen Buckley, Precinct Representative
Rosemary Lamers, School Board Representative
Rusty Bridle
Maury Friedman
Dick Hansen
Eileen Latimer
Jack Lessard
Richard Nichols
Michael Pierce

Excused

Russ Bernstein
Pat Collins
Norman Silberdick

Chairman Woolsey called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Approval of Minutes – November 7, 2006

Moved by Mr. Lessard, seconded by Mr. Pierce, to approve the Minutes of November 7, 2007.

Vote: 10 yes, 0 no, 1 abstention (Russell). Motion passed.

Interim Town Manager and Town Counsel Mark Gearreald addressed the Committee. He said the Committee faces two very big issues. One is warrant articles and the other is whatever may come out of the collective bargaining process. Mr. Gearreald said the Board of Selectmen asked him to poll the department heads to get their recommendations on warrant articles. The unanimously recommended approach is that there be three and only three warrant articles put forth by the Town. The first is the Operating Budget. The second is the Public Works drainage project and the third is the paving of the Island Path parking lot. This parking lot will pay for itself over a couple of years.

Chairman Woolsey asked why the fire station was not recommended. Mr. Gearreald said that the Selectmen have asked the Planning Director to undertake a facilities master plan. This process should be allowed to work itself through so that several things are accomplished at the same time. Mr. Gearreald said that for this year the taxpayers should be given a break on a project like the fire station. The same would hold true on John Hangen's road improvement monies. Mr. Gearreald assured the Committee that this would not produce a problem like Five Corners. Last year warrant articles added 30% to the budget. The default to default budget added only 2%.

Chairman Woolsey asked about the possible expansion in 2008 of Station 2 to include administrative headquarters for the Fire Department, housing for the Building Inspector and Planning Office. Mr. Gearreald said there would be professional involvement as well as

volunteer work. Hopefully floor plans and appearance will be shown. Chairman Woolsey said that if there is going to be a proposal for expanding Station 2, she wants to see the “entire” thing.

Mr. Nichols said increased maintenance expenses would have to be studied. Mr. Pierce said it would be necessary to use technology to save on electricity and heat.

Mr. Gearreald said that the Town would really like to pass an operating budget that satisfies the needs of the Town and assures the voters that the budget will only go up a small amount.

Fire Department/EMS

Mr. Gearreald introduced Hank Lipe, Chief of the Hampton Fire Department. He also introduced Chris Silver and Steve Benotti, Deputy Chiefs.

Chief Lipe said his budget comes on the heels of a meeting last July. This meeting was an open forum where the needs of the department were discussed. Based on that discussion, the department is coming forth with a “needs based” budget. Chief Lipe said he feels this budget will meet the operational needs of the department as well as provide necessary training and equipment. The budget allows for the restoration of the four firefighter positions which were eliminated in 2005. This would help meet demands and also offset the increase in expensive overtime. EMS revenue would also be increased.

Chairman Woolsey said that the existing members of the department are mostly individuals who have been there for a long time. She asked if Chief Lipe would anticipate that there would be a savings in overtime and also workers comp. Chief Lipe replied that this would depend on external forces.

Chief Lipe said that the 2006 overtime account was dramatically reduced because of the default budget. Overtime is over budget as it always is because it is demand dependent. There are also training monies in the overtime account.

Chief Lipe said he would like to remind everyone that the department’s business starts with universal health care at the local level. They are a service-based business built on demand. The demand has increased and the department is trying to keep a consistent level of service. Their source of revenue is EMS so there is some return on investment.

Chairman Woolsey asked Mike Schwotzer, Finance Officer, if he could give the Committee a closing statement on the three revolving funds in January. Mr. Schwotzer replied that he would. Chairman Woolsey asked what the total time is for ambulance service when transporting to Exeter Hospital. Deputy Chief Silver said it is approximately one and a half hours.

Mr. Friedman asked about single dispatch for Police and Fire. Ben Moore, Selectman, said that there are collective bargaining considerations and that if it was ever done it would not have an impact on this year’s budget.

Ms. Latimer said that there is a report that tells how many people the department should have. Deputy Chief Silver said that the report was NFPA1710. This report addresses staffing and

deployment and sets guidelines about providing services. Ms. Latimer asked what the minimum number was for staffing. Deputy Chief Silver said the minimum number was 17. Ms. Latimer said that if that were the case, even after adding the four positions, the department would still be about 30% understaffed.

Ms. Latimer said that the coverage within the Fire Department is the last thing she would like to see reduced. She said she definitely supports the addition of the four positions.

Ms. Lamers asked if benefits are included in the \$3.5 million budget. Ms. Russell replied that they are covered under Insurances.

Chairman Woolsey asked about the number of paramedics. Deputy Chief Silver said there are 16 paramedics and two in training.

Mr. Plouffe brought up the subject of rolling stock. He said he would be more interested in seeing mileage or hours of service. Chief Lipe said he would get this information to the Committee. Deputy Chief Benotti gave a synopsis of condition and mileage.

Ms. Buckley asked if there would be an ambulance at the beach. Chief Lipe said yes and it will be active.

Ms. Lamers asked if the department was on the same communications wavelength as the Police Department. Deputy Chief Benotti replied that the department's frequency is different than that of the Police Department, but that they can still communicate by radio.

Chief Lipe said that there has been a change in the culture with the general public across the country. The department gets called for everything. This is a trend and has generated an increase in calls. Ms. Lamers asked how many times there was a conflict where the department was understaffed. Deputy Chief Silver said that in 2005 there were approximately 310 times when there were simultaneous calls. Ms. Lamers asked if the additional positions would help alleviate this. Deputy Chief Silver said that it would.

Moved by Ms. Latimer, seconded by Ms. Russell, to recommend the following to the Board of Selectmen.

**THAT THE FIRE DEPARTMENT BUDGET BE APPROVED COMPLETE
WITH THE RECOMMENDATION TO RESTORE THE FOUR POSITIONS
THAT WERE TAKEN OUT OF THE DEPARTMENT IN 2005.**

Mr. Nichols said he felt the department should more seriously address opportunities such as having volunteer firefighters. Chief Lipe said that this would bring up liability issues and the training is as extensive as for a regular firefighter.

Mr. Pierce said he was opposed to Ms. Latimer's motion. He said the budget needs to be contained and that this budget does not reflect saving.

Ms. Russell said that last year the operating budget was 2 cents per 1,000. She said she did not believe any of the department heads or Selectmen have put forth a budget that is oversized. The Board of Selectmen is trying to find areas to save and at the same time continue services.

Mr. Nichols said it is necessary to find a way to live within a budget that can be afforded.

Mr. Hansen said the voters have told us three times that they are unable and unwilling to pay.

Mr. Lessard said he felt there was a way to use call firemen.

Chairman Woolsey said that the Committee has no control over the decision the Board of Selectmen make once the budget is placed into its hands. However, they have asked for recommendations and this is part of the total operating budget. She said she feels it is fair if this Committee chooses to recommend that these positions be replaced and then the Board of Selectmen will make the decision. She said it is important to remember this is an emergency service. This is not a matter of adding new positions. It is simply restoring to strength what the department had in 2005.

Vote: 6 yes, 5 no (Friedman, Hansen, Lessard, Nichols, Pierce), 1 abstention (Lamers). Motion passed.

Chairman Woolsey asked if the ladder truck could be displayed at the Deliberative Session. Chief Lipe said it possibly could be and that the truck will be in the Christmas parade.

Ms. Latimer asked for a total figure for utilities for 2004. This could be a factor since the Town is still operating on a 2004 budget. Mr. Schwotzer said he would get this figure, but it is possible that utilities have been adjusted.

Chairman Woolsey said the next meeting will be on Tuesday, November 14, at 7:00 p.m. in the Selectmen's Meeting Room. This meeting will address Police Department/Animal Control.

Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Committee, Mr. Lessard **moved**, seconded by Mr. Hansen, that the meeting be adjourned. The motion passed by unanimous vote.

The meeting adjourned at 9:09 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joan Rice
Secretary

Mary-Louise Woolsey, Chairman

